

# Újpest votes

*Analysis of the campaign of the politicians in the by-elections of the Budapest 11th national single mandate constituency*

Republikon Institute analysis



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## SUMMARY

- The by-election in Budapest's 11th single member constituency was necessitated by the resignation of László Varju, and in the absence of Tisza, he remains the frontrunner.
- The election holds real stakes only for DK, with the aim to prove that they can still defeat Fidesz.
- Fidesz is aware that their candidate, Zsolt Renge, is not the real contender, his campaign is running at a much lower intensity compared to Krisztina Csibi's in Tolna a few months ago.
- Varju's presence is a defining factor in the campaign. Fidesz seeks to turn the by-election into a referendum on him, while Varju portrays himself as a victim of a show trial.
- During the election period, Varju operates more as a representative than a campaigning politician, treating the campaign as just another task in his local work.
- Besides the Fidesz and DK candidates, only Csaba Balog, running for Mi Hazánk, is conducting a professional campaign. The other candidates' efforts are either difficult to interpret in the context of a by-election or clearly lack experts and resources.
- Although the election, like the one in Tolna, is considered a one-horse race, it has received significantly less national attention.

## THE ELECTION

László Varju has been the parliamentary representative of Budapest's 11th single member constituency since 2018. The constituency, which is 85% made up of Újpest, has been represented by an opposition politician in Parliament since its establishment. In 2014, the local election was won by Péter Kiss, a former MSZP minister, with 40.67% of the vote. However, following his passing a few months later, the by-election resulted in another victory for the MSZP candidate, this time Imre Horváth, who secured 50.54% of the vote. During his term, Horváth's relationship with his party deteriorated to the point that he eventually left MSZP and ran as an independent candidate in 2018. That election was won by László Varju, who received 40.8% of the votes, while his Fidesz opponent, Barna Pál Zsigmond, secured 35.26%. Voter turnout was 74.91%. At the time, Zsigmond was serving as Újpest's deputy mayor. In 2022, with a turnout of 71.98%, Varju won again, this time with 50.82% of the votes, defeating Zsolt Wintermantel (39.08%), who had been Újpest's mayor until his removal in 2019.

The by-election was called due to the resignation of László Varju. On December 3 2024 the Kúria (Supreme Court) convicted Varju of disorderly conduct, bodily harm, and disrupting the electoral process. The charges stemmed from an incident in 2018 when Varju attempted to enter the MTVA (Hungarian public broadcaster) building to read out the protesters' demands but got into a scuffle with several security guards. According to the prosecution, Varju allegedly grabbed one of the guards by the calf. In a separate case, Varju was also found guilty of offering money to candidates to withdraw from running against him in the parliamentary election—an act classified as electoral fraud. Due to this, he was supposed to be stripped of his mandate for incompatibility. Hungarian election law states that early elections cannot be held within one year of a general parliamentary election. If a single-member constituency seat becomes vacant during this period, it is not filled by a new election but rather from a party list. Had Varju waited for Parliament to remove his mandate (as happened with András Fekete-Győr), DK argues that Fidesz would have delayed the vote beyond April, ensuring that Varju's seat was filled via the

party list rather than a by-election. This would have allowed them to avoid an electoral defeat.

Since the DK politician was not banned from holding public office, he is eligible to run again in the by-election, meaning the vacant parliamentary seat does not have to be filled via the party list.

The verdict against Varju has become one of the central issues of the Újpest campaign. Both Fidesz and DK have placed the ruling at the forefront of their narratives, each interpreting it within their own framework but drawing different conclusions. This has led to the parallel portrayals of Varju: as a convicted criminal on one side and as a politician persecuted in a politically motivated trial on the other.

In the by-election—just like in Tolna’s 2nd OEVK—the Tisza Party is not running. Péter Magyar’s party, as in the January by-election, has once again called on its supporters to abstain from voting. Tisza’s absence closely mirrors their approach in Tolna, where they also stayed out of the race. Their reasoning is that they do not want to waste energy on an election that—even if they were to win—would not break Fidesz’s two-thirds majority. They argue that they refuse to participate in what they call Parliament’s "puppet theater."

Tisza’s absence, along with past election results, suggests that László Varju is the frontrunner. He has already won this constituency twice, and since its creation, the OEVK has consistently elected opposition candidates. With no other parliamentary party competing for left-wing and liberal voters, and given that Fidesz traditionally underperforms in Budapest compared to its national results, the odds remain in Varju’s favor.

## THE CANDIDATES

The DK was the first to announce its candidate for the election, once again nominating László Varju. Just like in 2018, the party is not running him as a joint opposition candidate, but independently. Varju is a nationally recognized politician with decades of parliamentary experience. Between 2008 and 2010, he served as

State Secretary at the Ministry of National Development and Economy. More recently, from 2022 to 2024, he was the Shadow Minister for Energy and Utilities in Klára Dobrev's short-lived shadow government. Beyond his parliamentary work, he also served as a mayor for four years, leading the town of Taksony from 2002 to 2006. Varju has the largest social media presence with 36,000 followers on Facebook.

Fidesz has nominated Zsolt Renge, the president of Fidelitas' Budapest chapter, as its candidate. His candidacy was announced by Zsolt Wintermantel, the former mayor of Újpest. Renge served as a municipal representative in Újpest's 13th electoral district from 2014 to 2019. He ran for the seat again in 2019 and 2024 but lost both times—first with 41% against Tibor Molnár, then with 34% against Kitti Modroczy. His past experience as a local representative is a key theme in his campaign. After leaving the municipal council, Renge remained active in public life solely as Fidelitas' Budapest president. His most notable public statement came in 2023, when he and Zsolt Láng held a commemoration for the 1956 revolution, during which he compared opposition politicians to ÁVÓ officers who had fired on revolutionary crowds. Renge currently has 11,000 followers on Facebook.

Dr. Bálint Gábor Szabó, a notorious figure in Szeged politics, is running as an independent candidate. Szabó has been a municipal councilor since 2019, having entered the assembly from the compensation list of the FSZV - Hungarian Association. Szabó was deprived of his mandate in 2023 because he had been sentenced to one and a half years in prison, suspended for four years, after seven and a half months of arrest. Szabó was arrested because he started to chase Viktor Orbán's convoy on Nagykőrösi road, often cutting into the convoy's cars and ignoring the rules of the Highway Code. Szabó has 53 thousand followers on his page ITT AZ IDŐ.

Csaba Balog, politician of the Mi Hazánk in Budapest's 13th district. Balog ran as a candidate in the 2024 election against József Tóth, the incumbent mayor for decades, but he only got 3.47% of the vote. He also stood as an individual candidate in a constituency in Angyalföld, neighbouring Újpest. There he came last with 7.83%,

behind the Fidesz candidate Hajnalka Gróf (20.79%) and József Tóth's candidate Gyula Borszéki (71.39%). Compared to Varju and Renge, Csaba Balog has only 413 Facebook followers.

Ildikó Horváth, an independent candidate, is running under the slogan "The value of independence". When announcing her candidacy for the election, she shared a short programme and a CV on her Facebook page. She has a degree in urban engineering and architecture and owns her own construction company. She was an independent member of the Municipality of Nyír from 2019 to 2024. Ildikó Horváth's politician Facebook page was created on 6 February, so she has only 75 followers.

The sixth candidate is the Labour Party's Mark Preyer. Preyer stood in Kőbánya last year and in a by-election in Óbuda this year but came last both times by just a few votes. Preyer does not have a Facebook page for politicians, but he has 179 friends on his personal profile, although his posts are only visible to them here. It is therefore worth considering the Labour Party's Facebook and TikTok pages, which are followed by 114 (Facebook) and 2985 (TikTok) users respectively, although these pages do not cover Preyer as much as other party issues (standing up for Bashar al-Assad's party, Gyula Thürmer's appearance on Belarusian state television's election show).

## THE CAMPAIGN ISSUES

When analysing election campaigns, it is essential to look not only at the candidates themselves, but also at the campaign themes they are promoting. With roughly three months between Varju's resignation and the election, the parties have had that much time to build their candidates around the issues they see as locally likely to win. The six candidates can be divided into two groups based on their messages. Candidates who thematise the verdict against Varju and candidates who do not. The former group includes the two most likely candidates, Varju and Renge, while the latter category includes the other four candidates. In the case of Varju and Renge, the inclusion of the conviction in the case of aggravated assault in their messages is not exclusive, but it is clearly central to their communication. In addition, all candidates understandably treat the mid-term elections primarily as elections in

Újpest, since only a negligible number of Angyalföld constituencies belong to the 11<sup>th</sup> national single mandate constituency.

László Varju cannot avoid having to respond to why he had to give up his mandate and why, after all, by-elections are being held. DK has found an obvious solution to this and its candidate Varju is being portrayed as the victim of a conceptual lawsuit, which the government wanted to remove him from the "chessboard" because of his work as a member of parliament. This message helps them to manage the criminal accusations made by Renge in a way that protects their own core voters. And defending core voters is important, because for the first time since Péter Magyar's emergence, DK has a real chance to show strength thanks to Tisza's absence. And it is not enough for the party to do well, it must also win, because after Varju's two victories, a defeat in an election where the parliamentary opposition to the left of Fides and Tisza are not running candidates would not bode well for the party's future. For this reason, one of Varju's key messages, which is also on his poster, is that Varju has already defeated Fides twice and will defeat it a third time. However, Varju's communication is atypical for a by-election campaign. DK's candidate communicates relatively little about the election itself (sometimes 1-1 post on countering, knocking, postering, local issues he will solve after his re-election, etc.), mostly behaving like an elected representative of the 11<sup>th</sup> constituency. László Varju will unveil statues in Újpest, make donations to charities, collect food with local patriots in 13<sup>th</sup> district and discuss the impact of the planned metro bus system on public transport in Káposztásmegyér. In addition, there is an equal share of his party and national political statements, in which he reacts to the state of democracy, Ferenc Gyurcsány's annual review and the price of fuel.

Varju's strategy is clearly aimed at showing that he is one level above the other candidates, that he knows the district, that he is active in its public life, that for him the election is only one of the district's issues, that is important, but that solving the district's problems is a priority. The fact that in nearly 7 years as an Member of Parliament (MP) he has built up enough of a base to see his actions, which are essentially campaigning, as local actions, helps him a great deal in this respect. Other MPs would not be able to do the same, in their case a similar strategy would

not be authentic. Moreover, the other candidates are also much less well known in the 11<sup>th</sup> constituency.

Zsolt Renge's campaign is not focused on the issues of Újpest, but on László Varju. One of his main messages is that he wants to remove Varju from public life. The Fidesz candidate has several posts saying that László Varju is a criminal, but there have also been posts attacking the DK candidate's asset declaration. When Zsolt Wintermantel presented Renge as a candidate he referred to him as such:

"The Fidesz candidate is Zsolt Renge, an ambitious young man who has also served Újpest as a municipal councilor. He is married, a graduate and has an unblemished record, unlike the criminal László Varju, who has been convicted three times by the Court, including for electoral fraud!"

According to Renge, Varju's districts are not properly represented in parliament, as he lives in the second district, Rózsadomb. Renge's emphasis not only on the fact that Varju lives outside the district, but also on the fact that he specifically mentions Rózsadomb. In this way, a picture can be painted in which Varju represents the elite because of Rózsadomb (one of the most expensive residential areas in the 2<sup>nd</sup> district and the whole of Budapest, which has been a symbol of the economic elite for decades) and Renge represents the locals in Újpest (Újpest is traditionally a working-class district within Budapest). Another frequent word in the Fidesz candidate's communication is 'criminal from Rózsadomb'.

The Renge campaign is not one hundred percent Varju-centric, besides messages attacking the DK candidate there is also a strong pro-police message, focusing mainly on homeless people ("There are no consequences for the fact that homeless people are overcrowding Újpest and are a public safety and public health problem for the people living here.") and the state of public cleanliness of the streets ("Development in Újpest and Angyalföld - clean and honest!").

The third major category into which Renge's messages fall is the further communication of government action. Renge puts certain topics (not related to Újpest at all) on a picture dominated by the colour purple, according to local



conditions, and writes his own name on it, and that people should support him for that. These messages include: a 40 km motorway in Vas County; a 730 metres (Guinness record) pedestrian suspension bridge in Sátoraljaújhely.

In addition to these, of course, Renge also performs the classic electoral posts, countering, knocking on doors, but at one point he also played guitar at the grave of Béla Radics in the megyeri cemetery. Renge was a guest on Hír TV on 31 January, during which he said nothing except that László Varju is a criminal and that he and his family are local residents. When it came to what he would do after he had the necessary signatures and confronted the residents of Újpest with the fact that "László Varju has been sentenced by a court", he said that he could have listed more things to do, but he did not. By the end of the programme, the presenter managed to get enough out of the candidate to say that he would improve Újpest.

Bálint Szabó's campaign focuses on his usual provocative and highly performative actions. Szabó, who consistently refers to himself as a "lawyer and trumpeter, a regime-changing parliamentary candidate", donned the mantle of the scandal-mongering politician in Újpest after Szeged. He even made the national news by disrupting the February session of the Budapest General Assembly for hours, but he has also had several other, less media-attentive events in recent weeks. Szabó refers to himself as a trumpet player for a reason, once disrupting a Puskás Akadémia - Újpest football match, but he has also tried to disrupt other political events with his trumpet playing.

Unlike his competitors, Szabó communicates exclusively in videos, sharing up to 6-7 of them a day on his platforms. These can be anywhere between a minute and a half and an hour long. In his videos, he often addresses issues unrelated to Újpest, such as school closures, young people and the corrupt political elite in general. In addition, he uses his videos to mobilise his supporters, which he has chosen a very particular way of doing: he has covertly used them to vandalise his opponents' posters (I am glad that the citizens of Újpest and Angyalföld have done the dirty work for us, in which (...) the posters (...) put up by László Varju have been taken

down from the streets of Újpest. Hundreds of posters have disappeared, quite rightly." <sup>1</sup>).

Poster vandalism has also been a major issue among candidates in recent weeks, with Renge and Varju both reporting that their posters have been vandalised or removed, leading to legal action. At the same time, however, Renge has also positively welcomed on his own page the fact that László Varju's posters were vandalised, and that he himself put a 100% Gyurcsány sticker on one of them. <sup>2</sup>



Photo posted by Zsolt Renge. <sup>3</sup>

Szabó's other videos show that, in his opinion, there was no regime change, as there is only one side in politics today, and that is Fidesz. All other political parties serve the interests of Fidesz, including DK, Mi Hazánk and the Tisza Party. He does not consider Viktor Orbán to be sovereign either, he says the prime minister is under Russian, Israeli and Arab influence. According to Szabó, László Varju was only allowed to run in this election because Fidesz allowed him to. Szabó believes that, partly because of his influence, a real regime change will soon take place.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/ittazidoszb/videos/1065588648663852>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/reel/2038335856571887>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1111556264316447&set=pb.100063862504045.-2207520000&type=3>

Szabó pointed out that he considers MÁV (Hungarian State Railways) to be very bad, and criticized DK as well, as the plaster is crumbling from their party office in Újpest. To solve this problem, he called in the emergency services, who cordoned off the party office's pavement. He calls for a candidate debate and for the elected representative to return a large part of his salary to Újpest. He would like to see parties not campaigning everywhere, but only in the main squares, with a fixed number of posters, in order to reduce littering and unnecessary public spending. If he won the election, he would waive his immunity. Although Szabó is critical of Péter Magyar, he uses more of the party president's phrases, such as "step by step", "it's over" or "Let's go, Hungarians!".

Of the challengers, Csaba Balog, the candidate of Our Country, is the one who is most concerned with local issues in his campaign. In Balog's communication, local and national/party issues appear in roughly equal proportions. In addition, he is the challenger to Varju who is most present in the outlying areas of Újpest, including Káposztásmegyer. His stalls appear around Óceánárok street or Kordován square, while Renge was mostly present with stalls only in the centrally located Szent István square in front of the Újpest market. Balog's main theme is health care and its aspects in Újpest. He promises his voters that he will fight for a new hospital to be built in Újpest, and that efforts to improve the quality of services at the specialist clinic will be central to his communication. In addition to the hospital, Balog also spoke about the creation of a new sports centre and a spa. He also advocates a change in the parking regime in the district and the protection of green spaces. The party is also translating some of its issues to the local level, for example by advocating that Hungarians should get jobs in Újpest instead of "non-Hungarians".

Interestingly, Balog's campaign is much less pro-establishment than Renge's. The pro-establishment face is most visible in the immigration issue, but here the emphasis is not on xenophobia, but on job protection. Among the party's national issues, initiatives against COVID vaccines and digital citizenship are the most prominent in Balog's campaign. During his campaign he was supported by Dóra Dúró and Előd Novák and held a joint street forum with both politicians.

Independent candidate Ildikó Horváth does not really have a message for voters. In a Facebook post from early February, she wrote in a few sentences that her main goals were to support local businesses, build a new hospital, build housing for young people and develop the 11<sup>th</sup> constituency in a sustainable way. From then on, however, he did not communicate anything at all, except that he is independent and sees independence as a value. His posters and posts also carry the slogan 'Independence is a value'. Most of his surface messages are that an independent candidate would serve the interests of the community and not the parties, that an independent candidate does not think in party political games and that he would prevent partisanship for its own sake.

But Mark Preyer's campaign is even easier to summarise: as a parliamentarian, he wants to stop the oppressive workings of capital and fight against the exploitative nature of capital. He did not elaborate on the specifics of this in his video posted on the Labour Party platform. He also mentions that he will fight to stop capitalism from oppressing pensioners, abolish waiting lists and oppose the EU's financial dictates. Unfortunately for Preyer, these videos did not get the same viewership as the ones covering the fourth day of Gyula Thürmer's tour of Russia.

## POSTERS AND MEDIA

Poster and media campaigns are an indispensable part of election campaigns. An interesting point of last year's municipal elections was that many candidates, even incumbent mayors, sensing the changing needs of the electorate, campaigned not with their own party's image but with colours and graphic elements that were partly different from it. Below are examples of this in the posters of László Böröcz and Tamás Soproni, whose party affiliation is only revealed by their not very prominent logos. Soproni's poster is based on the image of the 2019 cooperation behind Gergely Karácsony, while Böröcz's is based on a colour reminiscent of Fidesz, but cuter. However, the colour scheme of the posters and the slogans used do not match those of the parties.



Although party affiliation plays a much bigger role in a general election (even if it is a by-election for an individual seat), it could be asked whether the growing antipathy towards parliamentary parties might not lead candidates to put their nominating organisations on the backburner a little. First of all, let's look at the posters and leaflets (unfortunately, not all the candidates' posters were available in good quality, so we have replaced some of them with the most similar online artwork). The images are taken from the politicians' Facebook pages and their own photos.



Varju's poster is one of the more interesting ones. On the one hand, the purple of Újpest takes centre stage next to the blue of DK. DK is represented not only in its colours but also in its logo, but the latter is rather small and not at all prominent on the artwork. However, the slogan "Varju for the third time" and the preceding slogan "With him we have defeated Fidesz twice" are prominent. This will serve to reinforce the local "strong man" image, which is already important in Varju's campaign, and will help to strengthen Varju's role as the clear winner.

In Renge's case, we see a relatively standard Fidesz image with the added bonus of the iconic Újpest purple colour. It is also important that Renge emphasises the word "honour" on his poster, which is clearly intended as a contrast between László Varju and himself, as a significant part of his campaign focuses on the verdict against Varju.

Bálint Szabó has no posters, and he often criticises his rivals for using them. The following picture can be considered as the most similar image element to the posters:



However, Szabó used this image only once (he set it as a cover image), and the bright pink and green colours didn't really connect with Újpest. In any case, the Újpest sign and the selfie in front of the town hall cannot be considered as a professional image element.

Csaba Balog's poster does not contain any particularly deep layers, it is closer to a standard Mi Hazánk poster than to anything else. The town hall in the background, the small Újpest coat of arms and the also not very prominent inscription "Újpest is also Our Home" are the only things that betray the Újpest connection. Of course, Mi Hazánk could not leave out the colour purple from its posters, which is a must for the party that uses green and white colours in Újpest. The change of the face colour is reminiscent of Momentum's 2019 campaign in Ferencváros. The purple poster of Mi Hazánk and Momentum's 2019 Ferencváros stickers can be seen below:

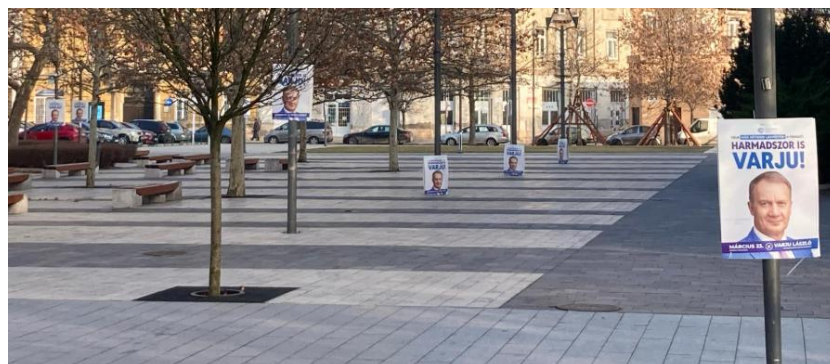


The Mi Hazánk poster tries to exploit nationalist sentiments with the Hungarian flag. The emphasis is not on the party itself, the logo appears only in the bottom right corner, but a person familiar with public life can easily recognise which party's candidate is advertising.

Ildikó Horváth's poster, like her campaign, is built around the word independent. Only the sign Újpest - Angyalföld reflects the constituency and, like Balog, Horváth uses the national colours on her poster.

Preyer's posters are not available in physical form, so we present one of the most reminiscent of the image elements that the Labour Party has put on the TikTok site. There is no longer any reference to Újpest or Angyalföld, but the general messages of the party appear on it. The emphasis is that the Labour Party wants to get into parliament, but anyone who sees this visual element must be very well informed in politics to identify what election is coming, because only the date tells you what it is.

The posters of Varju, Renge, Balog and Horváth quickly flooded Újpest. Szent István Square, which is also the main square of the district, was already full of Varju posters on the first day of the campaign.



In the following days, the other three candidates caught up, and the aforementioned poster vandalism began, following the principle of "too many posters in one tavern". On the streets, the Labour Party had a smaller presence, with the Republican analyst seeing only one Labour image element, a counter in the underpass of the Újpest-Központ metro station.





Of course, posters are not decisive in themselves, but media presence is at least as, if not more, important. Compared to the election in Tolna in January this year, the by-election in Újpest receives somewhat less media attention, so the "protagonists" do not get as much time in the national media. Although Zsolt Renge appeared twice as a guest and twice as an interviewee on Hír TV, neither his nor Varju's campaign was accompanied by national media interest. László Varju also appeared in video programmes on Hírklubb and Heti TV, but he did not appear in any high-reach programmes. The other candidates did not have even that much media coverage.

On social media, the playing field is evenly balanced, with five of the six candidates having their own social media pages where they post content on a daily basis. These posts have a lot in common that does not need to be highlighted: stand-ups, photos with the campaign team, etc.

Varju presents himself on his surfaces primarily as a sitting MP and as an integral part of the community he wishes to represent, not as a campaigning politician. The DK candidate posts about fruit fairs, a flower distribution on Women's Day, tree planting in the Farkas Forest, a charity food distribution and a statue unveiling. Here, he always makes sure that he appears among the many civilians alongside DK's well-known politicians (Ágnes Vadai, Norbert Trippon, etc.). Varju's videos focus more on his criminal case and his party's national issues. In addition to these, he sometimes slips in a video on a Újpest issue, such as the one in which he speaks

out against metro buses, because he believes that they would adversely affect the people of Újpest. Varju's videos are of professional quality, with fast editing and legible subtitles, and even some post-production work on the images.

Renge mainly posts purple and orange images on his interfaces, featuring government measures or his own values in a single sentence. They usually feature classic campaign slogans (e.g. "The future of our city is in our hands"). In addition, the Fidesz candidate sometimes spells out his or her thoughts on certain topics in a concise sentence, these posts usually contain nothing more than that (e.g. "László Varju = Gyurcsány's deputy in Rózsadomb - let's disrupt it together!"; "I believe in a stronger, safer, developing Újpest!"). The vast majority of his posts, as well as his manifestations, are mostly about László Varju. His videos are even more dynamic than Varju's, with music taking centre stage in many of them. There are videos of Renge and Zsolt Láng throwing leaflets into mailboxes to rock music, and others of Renge strumming the Republic band's "Fly away little bird" on bass (although in the video he refers to Zsolt Erdei as a boxer whose entrance song this was, and refers to himself as getting in the ring, but it's not hard to recognise the little bird - Varju image that Renge has constructed).

Csaba Balog's social media site is not as rich as the two politicians listed above, mostly redistributing his image materials, which he has already presented above, and sometimes advertising street forums. Most often, he posts pictures of him and his team in different parts of the district. His videos are much slower than those of Renge or Varju. The video is only a minute and a half long, but it operates at the pace of a portrait film, with no substantive content beyond a list of programme items and Balog's introduction, which makes you want to watch the cutscenes of Balog putting a cocoa snail (Hungarian bakery product) on the table for his children or kissing his wife goodbye in the morning. Balog has not only campaigned with his children here, he has also posted a picture of his son sitting next to his posters, with the implication that he is helping him to put up posters.

Horváth mainly posts pictures of himself doing traditional campaigning activities: putting up posters on poles, standing on counters and dropping leaflets in post

boxes. Each picture features a Hungarian flag and the slogan "The value of independence" in capital letters. The image quality of these photos is particularly poor, the pictures are grainy, as if they were taken with a telephone and there is no post-production work. In addition, although the flag and caption mentioned above appear in all the pictures, the size and position of these also varies from picture to picture. In several cases, parts of the image overhanging the edges have been partially cropped.

Other than these, however, there is little other content in Horváth's work. She did have a post about a rubbish collection in Újpest and, like Balog, he also posted an introductory video. The picture quality of this one is better, and a photo from the shooting shows that it was taken with a camera. In the video, Horváth walks around Újpest while talking about herself and the reasons for her departure (highlighting the value of independence). The video has better picture quality than the photos, but the video itself is technically much worse than Balog's. The camera moves very much vertically (no tripod or other means of stabilising the image were apparently used), the captioning of Horváth's monologue is often unluckily placed, as it blends in with other captions in the background, and the whole video itself seems a bit unconceptual.



Mark Preyer does not have a page of his own, he only appears on the Labour Party's pages, but he does not appear there much. Nor does his party remember his signature collection (unlike his party colleague György Urbin, who collected signatures for free health care in Albertirsa, earning two posts, but even Dominik Barsi, who collected 20 signatures for the same cause in Monorierdő, got one). Preyer's content is limited to one video, where he speaks out against the EU's financial dictates and multinational capital, wearing a black jacket over a white T-shirt (and a bag like a tarsoly plate tied to the side of his grey jeans). The video, like Horváth's, looks more like amateur work than a professional recording. The image is as shaky, the sound is very muffled and Preyer uses a strange hand gesture throughout.

## CONCLUSION

The race could only be open with Tisza's entry in the OEVK, failing which Varju's victory is the most likely. The other parties have fielded much weaker candidates, who are not only below the DK candidate in terms of national but also local

awareness, and we cannot speak of any outstandingly popular politicians. Renge has not been able to win an individual mandate since 2019, Balog has never done so, Szabó and Preyer have little to do with Újpest, and Horváth's campaign lacks the professionalism and resources that the candidates of the other parliamentary parties have at their disposal.

Varju's communication is also structured in this way, he behaves much less like a campaigning politician than his opponents, he plays the role of a politician who is secure in his position, an incumbent politician for whom the entire by-election is just a mandatory round. Of course, it is known that victory is actually vital for DK, as it will allow them to present themselves as a potent party capable of defeating Fidesz. From Fidesz's perspective, this election, unlike the Tolna election, also falls into the category of a hassle. The governing parties know that Renge's victory would be a miracle, which is also evident from the fact that the party headquarters allocated much less resources to Renge's campaign than to Krisztina Csibi's a few months ago. Fewer national politicians stood by Renge, he did not participate in nearly as many district events as Csibi did in Tolna, and his media presence was also less significant than that of his party colleague. In contrast, Csaba Balog was supported by his party to a similar extent as Dóra Dúró in January. However, Balog cannot expect a result of nearly 20 percent against him, not only because Mi Hazánk is weaker in Budapest than nationwide, but also because, unlike Tolna 2<sup>nd</sup> constituency, the Mi Hazánk candidate is not the second strongest in Újpest. Nevertheless, Balog and his party conducted the campaign with a consistency similar to that in Tolna.

Bálint Szabó is not campaigning as if he wants to win. For him, the election is just a tool that he can use to further increase his political notoriety with his performances. He probably achieved this, his trumpeting at a football match reached the threshold of several national press products. Ildikó Horváth took the election much more seriously than Szabó, who made the word independent her banner (and on her posters, leaflets, posts, etc.), but the lack of party affiliation was visible not only in the slogans of her campaign, but also in its amateur implementation compared to her competitors. Horváth did not have a professional

team behind him who could put together a strong political campaign even without parties, and this cannot be compensated for by the enthusiasm of the candidate. Horváth, on the other hand, was able to deliver a more serious political performance even as a quasi-civilian than Márk Preyer of the Labour Party, who perhaps did not even have a campaign.